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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet summarizes the outcomes of a 2-day symposium regarding the development of an Illinois Director Credential for directors of center-based early childhood programs. Day 1 included keynote presentations from national experts who provided a rationale for a director credential, a conceptual framework for defining director competence, the economic implications of director credentialing, promising practices in director credentialing in other states, and a summary of a state-wide needs assessment of directors. Day 2 included a panel discussion of some of the key stakeholders in the Illinois early childhood community, an update on the Building Bridges initiative, and an examination of exemplary models in early childhood professional development. The pamphlet provides working definitions of a director credential and a program director; lists areas of general consensus and unresolved issues from symposium participants regarding the structure of the credential, the process of credentialing, and the content of the credential; outlines the next steps in developing a director credentialing system; and presents excerpts from experts' presentations on the rationale for a credential, director competence, economic implications, models of early childhood professional development, and Wisconsin's director credentialing development. Symposium participants are also listed. (KB)

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ILLINOIS DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SYMPOSIUM

Executive Summary

April 24-25, 1997

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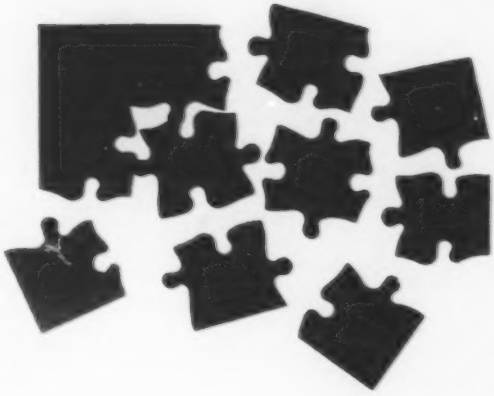

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Illinois Director Credential Symposium

Executive Summary

April 24-25, 1997

In April of 1997, 50 Illinois leaders representing early childhood organizations, institutions of higher education, state regulatory agencies, and the philanthropic community met at Cantigny, for a two-day symposium regarding the development of an Illinois Director Credential. Sponsored by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, the purpose of the symposium was to discuss the merits of a voluntary credential for directors of center-based early childhood programs in Illinois.

The schedule for the two days included presentations, large and small group discussions, and opportunities for networking. Day One included keynote presentations from national experts that provided a rationale for a director credential, a conceptual framework for defining director competence, the economic implications of director credentialing for the field of early childhood, promising practices in director credentialing in other states, and a summary of a state-wide needs assessment of directors. The afternoon was devoted to a small group brainstorming session discussing the critical elements of a director credentialing system.

Day Two began with a panel discussion of some of the key stakeholders in the Illinois early childhood community, followed by an update on the Building Bridges initiative, and an examination of exemplary models in early childhood professional development. The day concluded with another small group brainstorming session that discussed potential models for a director credentialing system in Illinois.

Defining the Pieces of the Puzzle

Constructing a director credentialing system is a bit like putting a large jigsaw puzzle together without the benefit of seeing the picture on the puzzle box. Discussions regarding the critical elements of a credentialing system focused around a series of questions relating to three key pieces of the director credential puzzle: structure, process, and content. Out of these discussions emerged areas of general consensus and unresolved issues.

Working Definition of a Director Credential

A document by any private or public agency, institution of higher education, or organized group which certifies that an individual has mastered the specific, defined skills, knowledge, and competencies believed to prepare one for performance as an early care and education Director.

Working Definition of Director

The general term, director, is being used to represent a variety of titles used by early childhood programs to describe the role of Director, including, but not limited to: Program Director, Site Supervisor, Executive Director, or Administrator.

Areas of General Consensus

Symposium participants agreed that the overall goal of a director credential should be to improve the professional orientation of directors and provide a system of professional recognition for individuals in leadership positions. In addition, they identified the need for a coordinated system of professional preparation for Illinois, appropriate compensation and recognition for early childhood directors, and improved funding mechanisms for professional development for center directors. With respect to the director credentialing system, the following areas of general consensus emerged:

Structure

- ✓ The Illinois Director Credential should be voluntary but may well serve as the impetus for increasing DCFS state licensing standards in the future.
- ✓ A private, independent organization should serve as the central office or Registry for administering the credential.
- ✓ A statewide collaborative group should be involved in the design of the credentialing system.
- ✓ Public and private funding should be procured to support the credentialing process. Start-up grants and monies to support ongoing costs of training will need to be procured.
- ✓ The design of the credentialing system should include arrangements for ongoing evaluation of training and the structure of the system itself.
- ✓ The credential should include different levels indicating "depth" of competence of a director (e.g. beginning, competent, master).

- ✓ Competence should be assessed using a variety of methods. These might include: formal college training; informal in-service training; documentation of life experiences through portfolio assessment; and proficiency testing.
- ✓ Credentialing should be conceptualized as only a part of a director's individualized professional development plan.
- ✓ Credentialing should require annual continuing education requirements.
- ✓ The credential should be renewable after a specified period of time.
- ✓ The credentialing system for directors should serve as the first step in the development of a comprehensive career development system for Illinois.
- ✓ A director credential should help directors advocate for increased compensation.
- ✓ A director credential should support center accreditation by NAEYC or other early childhood professional organizations.

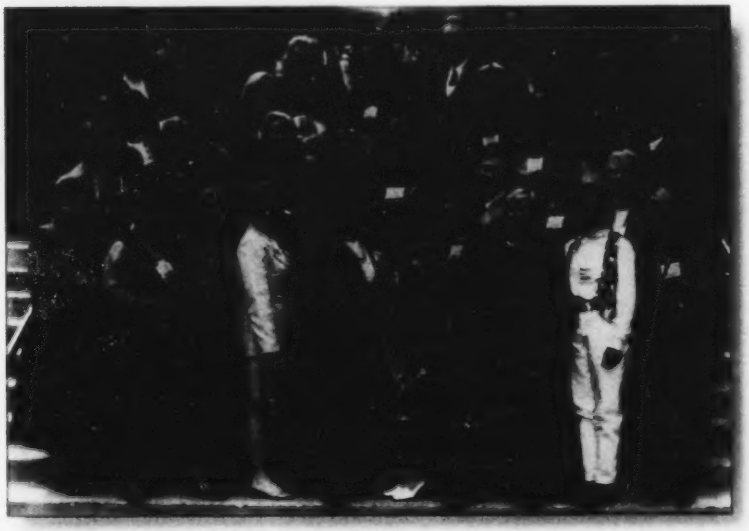
Process

- ✓ The credential will have to be marketed strategically to directors as well as their employers.
- ✓ Mentoring should be an important component of any director credentialing system.
- ✓ Increased opportunities for formal and informal training need to be made available to directors interested in pursuing the credential.
- ✓ Training should be tied to college credit at two- and four-year institutions.
- ✓ Some training or competency requirements should be able to be achieved at a two-year college level. Other training or competency requirements may be best achieved at the baccalaureate or graduate level.

- ✓ Training should enhance networking and cross-fertilization within the field.
- ✓ Training should be made accessible to directors in all regions of the state through alternative user-friendly delivery systems.
- ✓ Training should be kept affordable to directors.

Content

- ✓ Core competency requirements should recognize that effective administrators are also effective educators. Directors need a solid foundation in child development and early childhood education as well as management and leadership.
- ✓ Core competencies should be consistent throughout the state.
- ✓ The core competencies assessed by the credential should be applicable to different types of early childhood programs.
- ✓ A prerequisite for attaining the credential would be classroom teaching experience.
- ✓ The content and format of training should be culturally sensitive.
- ✓ Training should include an applied component; it needs to be relevant to directors' professional responsibilities.



Unresolved Issues

The two days did not allow sufficient time to discuss all of the specifics of designing and implementing a director credential in Illinois. Many issues were left unresolved. Coming to some kind of agreement on these issues before proceeding with the implementation phase should be a high priority for the work groups who will take the initiative forward.

Structure

- Who will oversee the granting of the credential?
- How will the credentialing system be funded?
- Should director credentialing efforts be concentrated on getting all directors to Level 1 (Beginning Director) (a "bottom-up" approach) or should it focus on identifying master directors who define excellence/best practice (a "top-down" approach)?
- How will the credential system itself be evaluated?

Process

- How will directors be informed and motivated to seek the credential?
- How will directors make application and begin the credentialing process?
- How will directors submit evidence of training or competence achievement?
- How will the credential be renewed?
- How will training be delivered (college courses, workshops, technology)?

- How will life experience (competencies achieved on-the-job) be assessed?

Content

- What amount of formal and informal training should be required?
- What specific knowledge and skill competency areas will be covered?
- At what level should training for different competencies be offered (pre-baccalaureate or graduate)?

Putting the Pieces of the Puzzle Together — Next Steps

The energy and enthusiasm generated at the symposium strongly indicate that Illinois is ready to move forward with the development of its own director credentialing system. In their evaluations of the event, participants were invited to indicate their level of interest in participating on future work groups and recommend other individuals whose participation in the process could enrich the discussions and offer a unique perspective on the issues involved.

The Early Childhood Professional Development Project of National-Louis University will take the lead in convening a work group in July, 1997 to write a proposal to The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College for a two-year grant to develop and implement an Illinois Director Credential. Once funding is secured, The Early Childhood Professional Development Project will coordinate work group activities to design and implement the director credentialing system.

THE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS . . .

THE MAGICAL MOMENT
for Director Credentialing

***Barbara Bowman** is well-known in the early childhood community as a tireless advocate for young children and their families. As President of Erikson Institute and Past-President of NAEYC, she has also championed the need for a professional development system for early childhood professionals. Bowman gave the opening keynote address at the symposium. In her address, she presented four reasons for implementing a director credential.*

"We've had an explosion of knowledge in the child development field that attests to the importance of the early years to subsequent development. The new research on the brain tells us the human and material environments young children live in have a profound effect on their development and learning. Indeed, the quality of the environment actually facilitates the brain to grow and program itself in more complex ways. This means that how we structure programs for young children may have life-long effects on them.

"One, we have had 50 years of research on the effects of early care and education and the findings are clear—early childhood programs can be beneficial or harmful depending on what happens in them. In addition, a growing body of research shows that leadership correlates with program quality. If the director knows how to organize and maintain a particular kind of environment, the program is likely to have a

desirable effect on children and families.

"Two, there is also increasing evidence that most programs for young children do not qualify as high quality. This means, of course, that many children are beginning life with the liability of poor care and education and, therefore, compromised opportunities for development and learning. At least part of the reason for the inadequacy of programs rests on the inadequacy of the leadership. At least part of the inadequacy of leadership is due to the difficulty in finding directors who have the requisite skills and knowledge to provide effective programs.

"Three, early childhood programs are complex institutions that require administrative expertise. Most directors take on the job with very little formal training. I believe all this means that the field must recruit and retain directors who are highly educated professionals who understand child development and early childhood teaching and learning; who are able to see that these ideas are translated into program components by staff; and who are able to provide support and guidance for parents.

"Four, the time is right to pursue the development of a director credential in Illinois. Early care and education is on its way to becoming a permanent service of our society, and it's time we built a structure to provide it. More children than ever before are enrolling in early childhood programs and we must improve the quality of care and education young children are receiving. The director is pivotal in designing the kind of programs that will ensure quality.

"I believe it's the magical moment. Early childhood is on the lips of politicians, business people, and government officials as well as educators and scientists. A credential will add to our field by giving employers a standard, a benchmark, for who they should employ to manage programs for young children and their families. I believe recognition with a credential will provide incentives to enroll in director training. A credential will validate the professional competence of a director. I firmly believe that the time to stop talking and start acting is now. We can solve whatever problems arise if we just get started."

Defining Director Competence: *We Need More Than the "Trust Me" Factor*

Paula Jorde Bloom *is Director of The Early Childhood Professional Development Project at National-Louis University and a frequent presenter on issues important to directors of early childhood programs. In her remarks at the symposium, Dr. Bloom outlined what a credential is and how to define director competence.*

"Occupations as diverse as plumbers, veterinarians, funeral directors, security guards, nurses, and dietitians are all required in Illinois to be either registered or licensed before individuals can gain entry into their occupation or profession. Early childhood education is one of the few professions that does not certify competence directly through a formal certification process or through a license. We license facilities and we accredit programs, but when it comes to the actual workers—the teachers and the directors—our system has, by and large, been built on the "trust me" factor. This has not helped the professional status of workers, nor has it assured high quality programs for the families they serve.

"If we are going to create a more hopeful scenario for the future, we need to make changes at the top, starting with directors. The director is the gatekeeper to quality, the person more than any other individual who can impact program success. There are two ways to go about this —either a regulatory approach or a voluntary approach. Advocating for change through the regulatory system through licensure or state certification may seem appealing because it can impact quality swiftly once mandatory regulations are in place. A voluntary approach is more attractive, though, because it can be sponsored, implemented, and monitored by the profession itself—the very people who are most impacted by it.

Furthermore, a voluntary system can be structured so it provides incentives for achieving higher levels of competence than that which could be mandated as a requisite for the job. In this anti-regulatory climate, the most viable approach to improving the professional competence of directors is clearly going to be through a voluntary system.

"Defining competence as it relates to the multiplicity of roles a director assumes each day is a thorny task. How do we operationalize competence? There are three aspects of this that we need to consider: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As we articulate the essential components of a director credential, we will undoubtedly wrestle with two contrasting models of measuring competence—an input model and an outcomes model. An input model rests on the assumption that the accumulation of different courses, workshops, and experiences equals competence. An outcomes model is essentially a performance-based approach. It looks at key indicators of high quality programs like achieving accreditation, low staff turnover, full enrollment, staff resources, and so on. I suspect we will come up with some kind of blended approach where an individual demonstrates certain competencies through course work and through practical experiences as well as a command of knowledge and skill through demonstrative behaviors.

"Recognizing and valuing that there are degrees of proficiency for each of the knowledge and skill areas should serve to reinforce the fact that professionalism is an ongoing process of competency building; a professional spiral that moves a director toward higher levels of excellence. As we move forward in our work together, let us keep in mind that the ultimate goal of both training and credentialing should be to create a system that screens out incompetence, guarantees competence, and promotes excellence in professional practice. It is the children and families who will benefit."

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Child Care Economics: *Trends That Argue for Director Credentialing*

Karen Hill-Scott, Ed.D., *a nationally-recognized expert in family and child development issues, speaks often on the economic implications of policies and practices in the early childhood field. In her presentation at the symposium, Dr. Hill-Scott spoke on the relationship between director credentialing and economics. She outlined the trends that are expected to happen over the next couple of decades that will impact our field.*

"One trend is that we will begin to move toward managed care systems of child care. Independent providers will affiliate with managed care networks, largely as a byproduct of needing to organize child care payments under the pending welfare reform efforts. This will drive a greater expectation of accountability from those entities who fund the systems, as well as from the consumers who use child care. Accountability should ultimately translate to a greater consumer interest in quality and consistency. The major implication of this trend for the child care industry is that we will need to develop highly skilled management for the site level and for systems. Managers trained for these systems will be differentiated from others because of the qualitative superiority in their skill base. The credential could be the basis for identifying and certifying this management competence. The industry can then use the credential to upgrade standards, upgrade performance, and ultimately make the economic link, upgrade compensation.

"Another trend, already in ascent, will be to seriously address the following question: 1) A credentialed director is a better director; 2) A credentialed director will create a high quality program; 3) A high quality program will be more efficient; 4) High efficiency will permit better

compensation; 5) Higher quality will increase willingness to pay; 6) Willingness to pay will permit price increases; and 7) Price increases will produce both higher compensation and positive child outcomes.

"To follow the logic of the above answers, we must recognize that whether or not a director credential has any impact on the economics of child care will depend on what the credential produces. We within the industry must set high standards of performance. This means we are going to have to promote selectivity. Not everybody who wants to be a credentialed director can become one. We have also got to self-regulate and police ourselves as an industry in order to protect the voluntary and professional nature of credentialing. If we don't advance quality from within, the industry will subject itself to hostile and/or punitive publicity. Finally, we must link a director credential to a demonstration of competence. And how do we get there? We have to reach for the top. We're going to have to stretch for the top."

Credentialism and Career Development: *Two Models of Early Childhood Professional Development*

Gwen Morgan *is Founding Director of The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College and Senior Child Care Consultant for Work/Family Directions. Morgan described to the symposium participants some of the promising practices in director credentialing. In doing so, she shared a conceptual framework that distinguishes between a credentialist approach and a career development approach.*

"In the career development approach, we stressed the unfolding of intentionality rather than a single declaration upon entry into a four-year program. The credentialist approach means that when you enter a program, you know you're going to get a credential. Often you enroll because you have the advantage of wealth and educated parents. Intentionality unfolds differently in people whose advantages have been different. We need to design our credentialing system to encourage the increasing of intentionality.

"In the career development approach, we have stressed access to credit-bearing training so that people could get milestone credentials. That was more important than getting non-credit training. If you're in a profession that already has a lot of training requirements, you may not care much about credit for the specialized advanced training that you get. But in our field, we need to care about credit for every piece of training that people get and the credentials that they get along the way. Those credentials become milestones at different stages in their career. They become points of recognition rather than a terminal credential. The career development approach doesn't recognize any termi-

nal credential because we're interested in encouraging people to continue with life-long learning and to aspire to more and more accomplishments and achievements throughout their careers.

"A key point that career development planners have stressed, which the credentialists have not, is the central importance of diversity among those who work with diverse children and their families. Reforms in the career development system that I've been describing are a different kind of vision toward how credentials might look from the vantage point of the next century. Reforms from the career development vision require major structural and content changes in colleges. Reforms in the credentialist system require changes, but not quite that major and not quite as structural. Caring relations are maybe more important than the scientific cognitive knowledge that has been traditionally identified by credentialism during the 20th century.

"The director credential seems to have reached its moment in time. There is strong interest in what we've always known about directors; that they are essential to a quality program. But for some reason we have been willing to go forward without spending and investing any of our time and thought on how to help directors do a better job. Now there is a strong interest in a lot of different sectors in changing that."

Wisconsin's Administrator Credential: *A Collaborative Project of Professional Recognition*

***Pam Boulton** is Director of the University of Wisconsin –Milwaukee Child Care Center, and one of the developers of the Professional Credential for Wisconsin's Child Care Administrators. Pam served as the symposium facilitator. She described what the process of developing a credential was like in Wisconsin.*

"In Wisconsin what we have developed is an 18 credit, 6 course credential. We have also developed *The Registry*, our Professional Recognition System for early childhood professionals. It is a collaboration of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator's Association, the Wisconsin Family Child Care Association, and the Wisconsin Headstart Association. So, it is literally a collaborative project of the state organizations that have to do with early childhood professionals. *The Registry* takes all the pieces anyone in the profession has in their portfolio—from attendance at a conference to achieving a Ph.D.—gives them a certificate which indicates where they are on the Wisconsin early childhood career ladder and then notifies them of further training opportunities.

"It is *The Registry* in Wisconsin which oversees and awards the credential for directors. It is an exciting project because the credential is coming from the professionals instead of being tied specifically to one college or university. We are now going to a variety of colleges and universities and asking them to join us—to offer the individual courses or

the full sequence. We are working to make the credential which can stand alone, or can articulate to a variety of other degrees. These could include associate, bachelor or masters degrees depending on the institutions involved. It is truly a work in progress—something that is taking shape as we move along.

Our goal in Wisconsin has not been to form an exclusive club, but rather to give form to our professional acceptance of an educational imperative. My recommendation to you is to go forward with a director credential. It is something that is needed and reflects the respect that individuals who are in the director's position truly deserve."

Symposium Participants

June Aimen
Chicago Metro AEYC

Vita Bates
Illinois AEYC

Paula Jorde Bloom
National-Louis University

Pamela Boulton
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Child Care

Barbara Bowman
Erikson Institute

Joan Britz
National-Louis University

Peg Callaghan
Oakton Community College/ ACCESS

Denise Carter-Blank
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Debby Clinch
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Willie Cole
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Carol Dellahousaye
Voices for Illinois Children

Jan Dowling
Illinois Network of CCR&R Agencies

Eileen Eisenberg
National-Louis University

Mary Jane Forney
Family Service Center of Sangamon County

Laura Dean Friedrich
ChildServ

Beverly Gulley
Saint Xavier University

Margaret Hallin
YWCA of Rockford's
CCR&R

Deborah Hampton
Salvation Army Child
Care Center

Marsha Hawley
Illinois Cooperative
Extension Service

Regina Henderson
Ounce of Prevention Fund

Karen Hill-Scott
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Betty Hutchison
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Janis Jones
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Lee Kreader
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Ivan Lach
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Brent McBride
University of Illinois
Child Development
Laboratory

Gwen Morgan
The Center for Career
Development in Early
Care and Education,
Wheelock College

Shirley Morgenthaler
Concordia University and
IAECTE

Carol Neuhauser
William Rainey Harper
College/ ACCESS

Donna Rafanello
National-Louis University

Jackie Schaefer
Eastern Illinois University
CCR&R

Eva Serrano
El Valor Corporation

Leah Shapiro
Harold Washington College

Therese Kiley Shepston
Bradley University

Glenn Shive
Governor's State University
and The Council for Adult
and Experiential Learning
(CAEL)

Kimberly Peckwas Strzelczyk
Preschool Owners
Association/ Illinois Child
Care Association

Cindy Terry
Illinois State Board of
Education

Liz Tertell
National-Louis University

Symposium Participants (continued)

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Day Care Action Council of Illinois

Rebecca McBroom
Kankakee County Head Start

Maria Whelan
The Chicago Community Trust

Benna Wilde
Prince Charitable Trusts

Kimberley Williams
Erikson Institute

Audrey Witzman
Illinois State Board of Education

Cass Wolfe
Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Representatives from the following organizations were also invited to participate:

Department of Human Services, City of Chicago
Illinois Board of Higher Education
Illinois Community College Board
Illinois Department of Public Aid
KinderCare Learning Centers
Southern Illinois University
University of Illinois—Champaign/Urbana
Work/Family Directions

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